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SIX PRACTICAL TIPS FOR CULTIVATING HAPPINESS

by Patty Ray Avalon



Patty Ray Avalon is a Residential and Guest Trainer at The Monroe Institute. She trains participants to use their consciousness to access guidance, improve manifestation, and learn self-healing and self-actualization skills. She has developed an exciting new course called EnergyBody which explores the many stages and levels of expanded consciousness.

Happiness is suddenly a big topic in the world of science, psychology and spirituality. Google happiness and you will find a plethora of nifty bits intended to help you stop suffering and be happier. You'll find many things from "Positive Psychology," to Certification in the Science of Happiness, and a variety of inspired TED talks.

After pouring through endless blog posts and websites, I decided I couldn't read one more set of "how to be happy" guidelines from the experts. What I wanted was down to earth, real-people experiences to understand more about what happiness means, how to become happier more often, and what the benefits are in doing so.

I informally surveyed ten of my more successful pals about their personal happiness. Some had everything going well for them in all areas, others were in rough spots in their marriages, some had health issues, and a few were struggling financially. All agreed however, that no matter what their challenges were, they had the ability to create a general state of happiness. Also, these people didn't seem to view challenges as problems, but rather, as opportunities to shift into better possibilities. **Here is the collective response to the question, "What is happiness for you?"**

"Happiness is when I feel good, am content, confident, feel secure, and my actions are aligned with the desires in my heart and wisdom in my head."

The six tips they give for cultivating their happiness are:

1. **Get in alignment with your heart and head in regard to what you are doing.** Or stop doing it. Or start doing what brings you into alignment. There's a feeling of power and peace when one is operating from a place of inner integrity. My yoga instructor friend said, "When I am aligned with whatever I am doing, life becomes effortless; there's no resistance or struggle. "
2. **Consider an attitude adjustment.** There are times in life when we don't seem to get what we intend. Or people don't behave the way we would like. Years ago I found a book entitled, *A New Pair of Glasses*. It was about a successful businessman who had had a spiritual awakening as a result of changing how he did business. He chose to see everyone and everything through a filter of generosity and trust. Those were the qualities he eventually experienced over and over again as a result of seeing life through "new lenses." The Universe seems to mirror back to us exactly what we convey in our actions, emotions and viewpoints.
3. **Connect with meaning and purpose in your life.** All people at some time question, "What is my purpose?" One of my friends discovered that her purpose is simply, "To have life, and to have life fully." Another man said that his purpose is, "To be exactly who I am, not what others expect me to be, and to do my best."
4. **Acknowledge yourself, acknowledge others.** Look for all the ways you contribute, create, explore, and love in life. Feeling good is what happiness really is. When you take clear inventory of just how much you really accomplish in life, you will feel good. Most mornings I write a list in my journal of all that I intend to do that day. At the end of the week I look over my lists and see how much I have done and contributed to life; from checking-in with friends, to paying my bills, to household chores, to dreaming up new ideas, to following through on commitments. And a couple of times a year I write a list of all the things I accomplished, created, shared, and learned. It makes me happy to be of service and give to life. Acknowledging others goes a long way toward creating good will by telling people in words, writing or actions that you recognize and appreciate them.
5. **Let go of trying to control outcomes.** Letting go puts us in a place of feeling trust in life. We can rarely control how things turn out, but we can control our interpretations and responses to the results. Letting go also opens up our ability to perceive new solutions, let more inner energy flow, and relax and de-stress.
6. **Do things that raise your self-esteem and don't do things that lower it.** Stay in integrity as much as possible and forgive yourself when you don't. At one point in my life many years ago, I was feeling overwhelmed with feelings of low self-esteem. A very

wise friend said to me, “One of the best antidotes for low self-esteem is to do things that are esteem-able!”

And finally, here’s what my ten friends said about the benefits of cultivating personal happiness:

“I lose fear.”

“Life becomes effortless.”

“I’m more emotionally resilient.”

“I’m less stressed when I’m happy.”

“I have more energy.”

“I have an air of calm, and my calmness calms others.”

“I have better perspectives on life.”

“People mirror back kindness to me.”

“I tend to see the good in people and circumstances.”

“I trust life and people more.”

“My finances get better.”

“I enjoy life.”

All of these help us to feel good, and that is what the pursuit of happiness is all about. When we feel good, the universe responds in kind with good feeling possibilities. And on and on it goes.